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SUBJECT Exposing CIA Agents

TOM SNYDER: ...Also, a report from Chris Wallace at the headquarters of the CIA in Langley, Virginia, a place we hear about so often but seldom get to see.

CHRIS WALLACE: Tom, CIA Headquarters here in Virginia is just what you'd expect: big, impersonal, and bristling with security. But our story tonight is about how a handful of radicals have penetrated that security. Working just a few miles from here, they are exposing CIA personnel all over the world, blowing their covers.

It's all very damaging to the CIA, and all perfectly legal.

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SNYDER: It is no secret that the United States, as most other nations, uses its embassies not only for diplomacy, but also for gathering intelligence information. A spy working out of an embassy has good cover, good communications, and diplomatic immunity if he or she happens to get caught.

Most Americans who work at our embassies are not agents for the CIA, but some of them are. Who they are has always been a closely-guarded secret, for an agent's effectiveness depends on maintaining his or her cover, keeping his or her job secret. There is nothing so useless as a well-known secret agent.

Chris Wallace is standing by now in the main lobby of CIA Headquarters at Langley, Virginia with the story of how some people are methodically blowing the covers of American agents overseas, and how that is in fact damaging the CIA.

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WALLACE: Tom, in the last few years, almost 1000 CIA employees have been exposed around the world, their real names and real jobs printed in books and magazines. Who's printing the names? Not the Chinese or the Russians, but rather a small group of Americans who say they want to put the CIA out of business.

WILLIAM SCHAAP: The CIA exists in order to send these people out to subvert, to manipulate, to corrupt, sometimes to assassinate. And we're against all of that.

WALLACE: These three people are out to destroy one of the government's most powerful agencies. Bill Schaap, his wife Ellen Ray, and colleague Louis Wolf (?) publish a magazine called Covert Action Information Bulletin. In it, they blow the covers of CIA officers, from the top men overseas, called station chiefs, on down.

SCHAAP: Do we have any chiefs of stations, specifically, that we know?

LOUIS WOLF: Oh, yes.

SCHAAP: You know about how many?

ELLEN RAY: Which countries?

WOLF: We have Zambia. We have Ethiopia.

SCHAAP: I hate to be elitist about it, but I think that when we do it, it's always good for the beginning paragraphs in that "Naming Names" column to be chiefs of station, if we've got 'em, and try to concentrate on senior people, if possible.

WALLACE: CIA operations are directed from headquarters just seven miles from the magazine's office. The agency's primary job is to collect and analyze foreign intelligence. But over the years, the CIA has also been involved in covert action: the secret use of U.S. money and power to influence events overseas, everything from infiltrating labor unions in Portugal to helping overthrow a government in Chile.

Schaap and the others believe that by exposing CIA personnel they can put them out of the covert action business, dry up their sources, and make it difficult, even dangerous for them to do their work.

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: They are avowedly doing this in order to destroy the intelligence-collection capability of our country, which they do not believe in. But the Congress believes in it. The President believes in it. The country believes in it.

WALLACE: The Director of the CIA, Stansfield Turner. He says the damage done to the agency has been tremendous.

ADMIRAL TURNER: And a lot of money and attention and effort is authorized to be put into intelligence; and here a handful of people are trying to thwart the will of this country. And they should not be permitted to do that.

WALLACE: They call themselves patriots and say the CIA is doing a dirty business. What do you call this?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Traitors.

SCHAAP: People have called us traitors, have used that word; some of our right-wing critics, in any event. We don't accept that at all. Our position is that we're not only Americans, but we consider ourselves loyal and patriotic Americans.

Our goal is for our society to be a better society.

WALLACE: Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the magazine is that it is perfectly legal. The people who put it out are private citizens who get their information from public records, all within the law, and, as the CIA acknowledges, very accurate.

Bill Schaap and Louis Wolf showed us how they do it.

SCHAAP: Our primary sources are public documents, most of which are in the National Archives here in Washington. If you know what you're looking for, it's a good place, because then they will get the appropriate volumes for you. They provide you with table space, working space, even typewriters to use. A major source for our research, the biographic registers, the Foreign Service lists, and so on.

WOLF: You look for people who are in State Department cover who don't really appear to have a reason to be there. For example, you find somebody who's called a political officer or an attache or a first, second or third secretary or a consul or vice consul; but, in fact, their backgrounds and biographies reveal that they don't have that as a real job.

WALLACE: About 6000 copies of Covert Action are printed every other month. There are 2000 subscribers, both in the U.S. and overseas. And the magazine is sold openly on newsstands for two dollars. In fact, 40 copies of each issue are delivered to a bookshop in the State Department, where they sell out rapidly.

As we said, almost 1000 CIA employees have been exposed so far. The most controversial case was in 1975, when, along with

former CIA officer Philip Agee, Schaap and his colleagues identified Richard Welsh as working for the agency.

Your station chief in Athens, Richard Welsh, was assassinated in 1975 after his cover was blown. Who do you blame?

ADMIRAL TURNER: I feel a degree of blame goes to those people who published his name. Of course, it was some terrorist organization in Athens that picked that up and decided to do it.

WALLACE: Welsh was gunned down in Greece more than a year after he was exposed in print. His body was brought back to Washington for a hero's funeral.

The people from Covert Action say they bear no blame for the killing. But they also feel no sorrow.

SCHAAP: No. We had absolutely nothing to do with the assassination of Richard Welsh. And it's one of our major bones of contention with critics of the work that we do.

WOLF: This was his career, this was his job. And his wife knew what he was doing, surely. And as the rest of us are responsible for what we do, I think he is responsible for what he was doing.

SCHAAP: I shed no tears over his death. I didn't feel good about it. I didn't feel about it, for many reasons. And I certainly am against assassination as a political method, and I'm against people being killed for any reason.

I shed no tears because I don't believe that Richard Welsh did not know what he was doing all his years in the CIA, nor do I not believe that he was himself responsible for many, many, many deaths.

WALLACE: On the island of Jamaica, we saw the impact Covert Action magazine normally has. When the country developed close ties with Communist Cuba a few years ago, radicals here say the CIA started causing trouble. They were eager for some way to fight the agency.

This is the U.S. Embassy in Kingston, Jamaica. Thirty-six Americans work here, all of them supposedly employees of the State Department. But in the last year the people at Covert Action have identified three of those Americans, by name, as actually working for the CIA.

No one here at the U.S. Embassy would discuss those charges with us. But as you might imagine, leftists here in Jamaica have made the most of them.

Last July, Covert Action identified a man it said was the CIA station chief in Jamaica. That same month, the local Communist newspaper, The Struggle, picked up the story.

Donald Robatham (?), a university teacher who writes for The Struggle.

DONALD ROBATHAM: Well, we learned from the group in the United States which publishes Covert Action. When we got the information from them, we tried to find out the address of the people involved. In one case, the person was the chief of station. We sent two photographers to his house. We then published a story in our fortnightly paper, Struggle, which I think had an important impact.

WALLACE: Could you have identified CIA personnel here without Covert Action magazine?

ROBATHAM: Definitely not.

WALLACE: Robatham said the day after the picture of the man's home was published, the CIA station chief moved out. We went to the house in Kingston to check out the story.

A U.S. diplomat used to live here.

WOMAN: Yeah.

WALLACE: He doesn't live here anymore?

WOMAN: No.

WALLACE: He's not here anymore.

WOMAN: No.

WALLACE: Do you know where...

WOMAN: ...Jamaica.

WALLACE: He left Jamaica.

WOMAN: Yeah.

WALLACE: Do you think you have curtailed the amount of covert action the CIA is involved in here in Jamaica?

ROBATHAM: Yes, absolutely. And made it more expensive for them to be involved in what they are involved in, and more dangerous.

WADE THOMAS: When Mr. Welsh was killed in Greece,

that's a pretty vivid example of what can happen to you when leftists or other organizations take off after you.

WALLACE: While no one with the CIA in Jamaica would talk with us, retired officer Wade Thomas did. Thomas was the CIA's top man in a Latin American country when his cover was blown.

Well, did you fear for your life?

THOMAS: I feared for my life at times, yes. Now, I had no indication that any particular person or any particular group was after me. But I feared for my life, yes. And I did what I could to protect myself.

WALLACE: Did it make it more difficult for you to do your job?

THOMAS: Some sources would be reluctant to talk to us to the extent that they had in the past. I had one fellow, for example, who would say to me almost every time I saw him, usually once a week, "Well, my name didn't come out this week. Will it come out next week in somebody's book, in somebody's article?"

WALLACE: Did it impede you from doing the job you were trying to do?

THOMAS: I would say it reduced our effectiveness, perhaps by 50 percent, perhaps by 30 percent. It's kind of difficult to get at in terms of percentages, but it definitely made it more difficult.

WALLACE: Of course, making it more difficult is precisely what Bill Schaap and the others want to do.

SCHAAP: Nobody else in the world, Soviets or anybody else, does this kind of manipulation and subversion on the same scale and intensity that the United States does through the CIA.

WALLACE: What do you think would happen to these people if they lived, say, in the Soviet Union and were exposing the operations of Soviet intelligence?

ADMIRAL TURNER: They wouldn't see the light of day, and they would be put in jail in nothing flat.

WALLACE: But here in the U.S., there's nothing the CIA Director can do about them.

They're immune, free and clear, to keep doing what they're doing.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Yes. As far as I know, they're virtually immune at this point.

WALLACE: Meanwhile, the people at Covert Action keep at it. They've just put out a new issue exposing CIA personnel in 15 more countries, everywhere from Algeria to Singapore.

With me here at CIA Headquarters to discuss all this is the agency's number two man, Frank Carlucci.

Mr. Carlucci, is the CIA going to do anything about Covert Action magazine?

FRANK CARLUCCI: Yes, Chris, we hope to. We're in the process of drafting legislation right now, in cooperation with the Attorney General. We hope to present this legislation to Congress within the next couple of weeks.

WALLACE: You know, this has been going on for several years. Quite frankly, I'm surprised that Congress and the CIA have let it go this long.

CARLUCCI: There have been various bills introduced in the Congress. We've been conducting a dialogue with the Congress. It's not an easy issue, because you get into such questions as freedom of the press and the First Amendment.

It's also fair to say that the situation has become much more serious in recent months.

WALLACE: Is this a top-priority item for the CIA?

CARLUCCI: Yes, sir, it is a top-priority item for the CIA.

WALLACE: You're being hurt by this.

CARLUCCI: Yes, sir, we are.

WALLACE: You know, you say it's a difficult issue. In fact, it is. You're trying to legislate against private citizens using public records. How do you do that?

CARLUCCI: Well, we want narrowly-based, narrowly-drawn legislation which would target in on people who deliberately and maliciously expose people that they know are under cover, performing legitimate activities on behalf of the United States Government.

WALLACE: Briefly, do you think you'll get it this year?

CARLUCCI: We are hopeful.

WALLACE: Mr. Carlucci, thanks very much.

CARLUCCI: Thank you.

WALLACE: Tom?

SNYDER: Of course, even if there were a law, would they stop it? Would they stop Covert Action?

WALLACE: The people at Covert Action don't claim to be martyrs. They say they have no intention of going to jail. They say they'd fight the law. They think it's unconstitutional, the kind of law that Mr. Carlucci is talking about. But that if it were passed and upheld by the courts, they'd obey it. They also say that they'd find some other way to make life difficult for the CIA.

SNYDER: I'm not convinced that this is the way to correct abuses within the CIA. And I just wonder if any other nations in the world would tolerate this sort of behavior when it comes to their intelligence apparatus.

WALLACE: Some do. Certainly, the Communist countries don't. Even a country like Britain has an Official Secrets Act that makes it very difficult. But some Scandinavian countries have allowed this kind of action. They don't like it either.

SNYDER: All right. Thank you, Chris.